THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child involving children in armed conflict obliges State Parties to take feasible measures to ensure that minimum age of recruitment to armed forces is raised to 15 years and that the members of their armed forces, who have not attained the age of 18 years, do not take a direct part in hostilities and also to ensure that the persons, who have not attained the age of 18 years, are not compulsorily recruited into their armed forces. As per the information received from Ministry of Defence the minimum age of recruitment of soldiers in the army is 16 years. Persons recruited undergo basic military training for upto two and a half years from the date of enrolment and are then inducted into regular service. No recruit below the age of 18 years is deployed in armed conflict. There is no compulsory recruitment in India. According to the UNICEF website only 18 countries have ratified the Protocol. The implications of ratification are receiving the attention of Government.

Conversion of Degree Colleges into Autonomous Colleges

3412. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that University Grants Commission is in the process of converting a number of degree colleges into autonomous colleges;

(b) if so, the colleges so identified in Rajasthan;

(c) The amount spent by UGC for infrastructure and various development activities;

(d) whether UGC is reviewing their performance after releasing funds; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) The scheme of autonomous colleges, evolved with a view to providing academic freedom to colleges, has been under operation for quite some time. Under the scheme, autonomous status is granted to deserving colleges on the merits of each case. 130 colleges, spread over 29 universities in eight States, have so far been given the status of autonomous college.

(b) According to the information furnished by the University Grants Commission, no proposal for grant of autonomous status to any college in Rajasthan has so far been received from the State Government.

(c) Under the scheme of autonomous colleges, financial assistance up to Rs. 8.00 lakh per annum is provided to an autonomous college for academic and infrastructural development.

(d) and (e) The right to autonomy conferred under the scheme is subject to periodic reviews and in case of evidence of declining standards the autonomous status of a college can be revoked.

All India Survey of School Education

3413. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Council of Education Research and Training has decided to conduct All India School Education Survey for the seventh time; if so, the main reasons for conducting such a survey;

(b) whether the survey would be conducted on a census basis, covering about 0.6 million villages and towns, more than one million rural habitations and about one million schools, in all the 35 States and Union Territories of the country; and

(c) if so, by when this survey is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) Yes, Sir. The reasons for conducting the Survey include updation of data base created during the conduct of 6th survey in 1993, creation of new data items in the context of changed scenario to provide a correct picture based on ground realities.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The survey is likely to be completed by 31st March, 2004.

Bachelor and Master Degree courses without UGC approval

3414. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University and Jamia Millia Islamia have been running a number of Bachelor and Master Degree courses, without approval of the University Grants Commission, as per recent newspapers reports;

(b) if so, the details of such courses; and